

Citizen Journalism In Digital Era: Society's Point Of View And Its Impact On Democracy

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Abstract

This paper highlight the power behind society's point of view in transforming information and spreading democracy through citizen journalism in the digital era. This research aims to understand society's point of view that captured in the citizen journalism. The rapid growth of information technology and digital media leads to a big changing of the way people use their own social network. At first, digital media used to be a platform that work like a personal diary, where people can share, comment and post anything they like to. Then, digital media particularly social media is more beneficial and even it become people's source of living. Various new jobs based on digital society appear, one of them is Citizen Journalist. Citizen journalism play some role in the dynamics of political situation, as seen on Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street. Citizen journalism also play prominent role in developed countries, such as United States, France, Germany, and China. In the modern world, citizen journalism is a powerful device in order to build an open and democracy society. Moreover, this study analyzes the role and impact of citizen journalism as tools in transforming knowledge, bridging inequality and even to the extend in delivering modern democracy.

Keywords: citizen, journalism, media, information, democracy

1. Introduction

Today, the world is becoming more open and networks are also possible to be formed not only between countries, but also between organizations, institutions, multinational companies, and even between individuals. Globalization allows openness and easy access across national borders. The rapid development that is influenced by the rapid globalization enables the transition of the international system - from which only involves the state as the main actor shifts into a multi-factor that involves relations between many actors in the dynamics of international relations.

Globalization and the shift of the international system from traditional to transnational have also opened up opportunities for the emergence of many movements fronted by actors other than the state. Many non-state actors have sprung up, both civil society, multinational companies, non-government organizations and influential individuals. These non-state actors helped enliven the dynamics of international relations through the various movements and actions they took. Movement or movement is a form of joint reaction that can be carried out by non-state actors in conveying their aspirations towards institutions and other dominant actors.

Globalization becomes a phenomenon that brings great changes to the world. Technological progress and fast flow of information are some of things that arise as a result of the rapid globalization. Rapid growth of technology going hand in hand with the rise of digital media. This certainly also encourages the existence of global communication that is cross national borders. It's not that hard anymore to send and received information from one country to another. Information moves quickly in seconds, the news spread very fast, even though the news comes from the end of the world.

Another result of globalization is technological advances, which also support the emergence of various media in communication. Traditional media is no longer popular. It has been replaced by any media that are encoded in machine-readable formats, or known as digital media. Email, website, video game, and social media are some of examples of digital media. Social media is very well known as most favorite tools. Blogs, social networks and wikis are the most common forms of social media used by people around the world.

At present, people not only can spread information through social media. Social media become more valuable space where people can share their life, knowledge, perspective and opinion to others. At first, social media used to be a platform that work like a personal diary, where people can share, comment and post anything they like to. Then, digital media particularly social media is more beneficial and even it become people's source of living. Various new jobs based on digital society appear, one of them is Citizen Journalist. Citizen journalism play some role in the dynamics of political situation, as seen on Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street. Citizen journalism also play prominent role in developed countries, such as United States, France, Germany, and China.

In the modern world, citizen journalism is a powerful device in order to build an open and democracy society. Citizen journalism today is not only play role as media, but also as tools to promote and spread the value of democracy in some countries. This paper highlight the power behind society's point of view in transforming information and spreading democracy through citizen journalism in the digital era. This research aims to understand society's point of view that captured in the citizen journalism.

2. Globalization: The Key to the Development of Global Civil Society

Historical change of human society has been seen in the late 20th century. Comprehensive explanation of the network of social relationships that involve humans can be described. We see a global connection, which does not only involve one aspect of the network but encompasses a variety of connected fields, such as the economic system, political coordination, and global communication networks. We are not only connected in a global network, but also connected as a global community or global society (Shaw, 1994).

The concept of global society arises because it is closely related to the global crisis that engulfs the world community. Global society can be identified by looking at the development of the global crisis. This crisis has made the global community feel the same disruption, and raises the need to provide a form of joint response — which certainly supports the creation of a global community unity concept. The crisis that becomes a common disorder appears at various levels of social relations, both in the economic, environmental and political fields. Its influence is also felt in the upheaval and instability in relations between countries (inter-state relations), which then gave rise to new forms of relations between people in the world.

The emergence of global society is, however, beset by contradictions. Indeed one of the principal ways in which we can identify a global society is by the development of global crises. It is our common experience of fundamental disturbances, and the need to shape common responses, which is helping to bring global society into being. These crises are experienced at every level of social relations. They are socio-economic - as in the re-emergence of cyclical crises of the capitalist economy, which produce recessions now increasingly

experienced in every corner of the globe. They are environmental - as in the production by global industry of harmful climatic effects which are felt everywhere, and even seen as planetary phenomena. They are especially political - manifested in a unique turbulence of inter-state relations and instability of state structures, leading to new forms of war at civil as well as inter-state levels (Shaw, 2004 : 2).

The global crisis is widely regarded as an international problem, because it is a crisis that occurs involving relations between countries. However, problems such as socio-economic, environmental and political issues are not only imprinted as problems between countries. These various issues become global community issues because they grow from a complex network of problems involving social relations around the world. When this is only seen as a problem between states, then this study would be very limited, because social relations are not just problems or issues between states/countries (Shaw, 2004). Thus, the development of the community movement, both transnational and global society is another challenge for the approach in international studies field.

At the end of 1999 there were actions followed by thousands of people in the United States. Thousands of these people carried out joint actions as a form of rejection of the world trade organization, the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Although media reports portrayed the protesters as a combination of American labor unionists who wanted to protect their jobs at the expense of Third World workers and hippies left over from the 1960s, in fact the protesters represented a broad and to some degree transnational coalition of concerns. They objected not only to the wto's ability to override domestic environmental legislation but also to the very nature of the processes by which governments and corporations are fostering economic integration. (Florini and Simmons, 2000 : 1)

The movement was carried out not only because they were worried that the WTO would rule out domestic legislation, but also concerns about the trade process that made the government and corporations develop international scale economic integration. The movement of thousands of civil society, most of whom are workers, represents a common concern of a large coalition of transnational communities.

The efforts of the transnational community to involve themselves in global/international decisions do not stop at the protest movement to the WTO alone. Similar community movements also emerged in various parts of the world, such as the anti-corruption movement known as Transparency International, the environmental issue movement that formed the World Commissions of Dams, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by 136 countries which is a form of rejection of nuclear. Various social institutions, such as non-governmental organizations, informal associations, and coalitions were formed very quickly because of the rapid and widespread support of cross-country connections (Florini and Simon, 2000).

3. Citizen Journalism as one of global civil society phenomenon

The development of global civil society is closely related to globalization. Globalization that allows exchange of information, transportation, communication, technology and trade flows also opens up opportunities for the birth of a joint movement of the global community. Technological advances, freedom of trade and the rapid flow of information open the birth of cross-border social interaction which then encourages the formation of networks among the world community. Through a network that

has been built, the concept of the state society seems to be eroded and has become a global civil society.

Understanding the concept of global civil society wouldn't be simple, because there are various definitions of the concept that develop across the world. Civil society often being linked to another similar term, such as social movement, non-government organization, non-profit associations, advocacy group, etc. According to Scholte (1999), we have to understand what civil society is not to established civil society it is. For sure, civil society is indeed not a state actor, it is non-governmental and non-official.

“For one thing, civil society is not the state: it is non-official, non governmental. Civil society groups are not formally part of the state apparatus; nor do they seek to gain control of state office. ... Second, civil society is not the market: it is a non-commercial realm. Civil society bodies are not companies or parts of firms; nor do they seek to make profits. Thus the mass media, the leisure industry and cooperatives would, as business enterprises, not normally be considered part of civil society.”(Scholte, 1999).

Civil society is not a state actor, non-governmental, non official and some of its activities are volutary based. In other word, civil society is a ‘third sector’ that quite distinct from non-government organization/actor and market sector.

A new fashionable word appeared in 1990's era called global civil society (Keane, 2003). The ‘global’ word added to emphasize the scale of the civil society. Civil society is globalized, no longer just a domestic movement but across national borders. In line with Scholte, Keane also declared that the term of global civil society refers to non-governmental structure and activities.

“To begin with, the term of global civil society refers to non-governmental structure and activities. It comprises individuals, households, profit-seeking businesses, not-for-profit non-governmental organization, coalitions, social movements and linguistics communities and cultural identities. ... It includes charities, think-tanks, prominent intellectuals, campaigning and lobbying groups, small and large corporate firms, internet groups and websites, employers federation, trade unions, etc...” (Keane, 2003)

According to Keane, the structure and activity of global civil society are diverse. It can be individuals, household, non-profit and even profit seeking business. The activities and actors also various, from charity, movement, corporate to internet group. For the context of the discussion of this paper, I want to argue that citizen journalism is also one of the type of global civil society phenomenon in this globalization era.

4. Understanding Citizen Journalism in Digital Era

Defining citizen journalism isn't that simple because there are various ways in defining the term of citizen journalism. According to Oxford Dictionary (2018), citizen journalism define as “The collection, dissemination, and analysis of news and information by the general public, especially by means of the Internet”. Citizen journalism is collection of information and news by public in general with various shape of the media—including traditional or printed media and digital media. This era, digital media or online media portray most citizen journalism all over the world.

Understanding the concept of citizen journalism means we also needs to understand the basic definition of citizen journalism.

“...the gathering, writing, editing, production, and distribution of news and information by the people not trained as professional

journalist. Citizen journalist are non-professionals who collect, disseminate and analyze news on blogs, wikis, and sharing website using tablets, laptops, cellphones, digital cameras, and other mobile and wireless technologies.” (Curtis, 2012)

An active role of audience is the basic nature of citizen journalism. Citizen journalism also often associated with modern devices, such as mobile and wireless technologies. It means citizen journalism is definitely a new sphere of modern media that exist and stay real close to the community.

The definition of citizen journalism is not really rigid and bounded. There are many ways and perspective in understanding the term of citizen journalism. Citizen journalism can be understood narrowly or broadly, all based on the context in which the position of citizen journalism is discussed.

“Citizen journalism’ refers to a range of web-based practices whereby ‘ordinary’ users engage in journalistic practices. Citizen journalism includes practices such as current affairs-based blogging, photo and video sharing, and posting eyewitness commentary on current events. Sometimes the term is used quite broadly to include activities such as re-posting, linking, ‘tagging’ (labeling with keywords), rating, modifying or commenting upon news materials posted by other users or by professional news outlets, whereby citizens participate in the news process without necessarily acting as ‘content creators’” (Goode, 2009:1288).

Another aspect that can't be separated from concept of citizen journalism is the rise of new media aside from traditional media. Internet, online, and digital interactive media are some form of media that associated with the activities of citizen journalism. However, traditional and printed media can also be device in delivering the action of citizen journalism.

Citizen journalism also known as a form of challenge for the mainstream media. The challenge from citizen journalism is also not rarely

associated with community movements. Citizen journalism could play role as grassroots movement and represent the alternatives of mainstream and traditional media. Media of citizen journalism such as sites may draw (consciously or otherwise) on norms and traditions associated with mainstream journalism (Goode, 2009).

As one type of online journalism, citizen journalism open wide range opportunity from every one of the society to become the content creator of their own media. Distinct from professional journalism that is processed by journalists, citizen journalism is prepared, processed and produced by anyone of the society who wants to deliver news. Therefore, citizen journalism also becomes a means of conveying the aspirations of the community with an honest perspective of the community.

5. Citizen Journalism and Its Impact on Democracy

Cross-country connections or networks are not easily formed. This has been started 150 years ago when globalization began to develop. Around 150 years ago globalization began to develop due to a decrease in costs in the field of communication and transportation. The reduction in costs is a trigger factor for the creation of globalization (Stiglitz, 2006). From there the development of technology, communication and transportation made the boundaries between countries no longer felt.

Along with its development, globalization is not always welcomed warmly by the world community. The phenomenon of the World Trade Organization (WTO) opposition community movement in Seattle written is one proof of that the rejection of globalization by transnational society does existed. In 1999, there was an initial protest against globalization in Seattle.

Protests arose because globalization which was supposed to be a new era of trade negotiations was precisely the driving force behind the formation of open market advocates. In other words, globalization has succeeded in bringing together people from all over the world - to fight globalization (Stiglitz, 2006). We now encounter resistance in the form of movements, protests and joint actions by transnational communities.

Despite there are many forms of global civil society such as movement, advocacy, campaign and other similar act; citizen journalism becomes one of global society phenomenon in this digital era. Undeniable proof of citizen journalism influence in today's media is that the big media organizations is no longer dominate the news (Riaz, 2011). The evolution of citizen journalism grow and develop creative citizen journalist like as bloggers, content writers, street reporters, online photographer, lifestyle reviewer, and many more.

As a brand new way of producing news, citizen journalism present to be a more neutral source of news. Citizen journalism which contain of society's point of view in presenting news help to reduce the bias of mainstream media in presenting news to the society. We've seen lately, many big mainstream media cooperation is owned by politicians (especially in Indonesia). Moreover, we've already witnessed some national media used to be campaigning tools for their owner in Indonesia's General Election in 2014. It's quite hard to believe the neutrality and impartiality of those media, particularly in delivering political issues. Therefore, society's point of view in citizen journalism becomes important aspect as another fresh media references for the people.

Citizen journalism through digital media also give hope and courage for the people who desperately want a better change. The citizen journalist provides invaluable information that can democratize media, as well as nations (Revis, 2011).

“For instance, the arrest of 29-year-old Egyptian blogger Alaa Abd El Fattah of Manalaa.net prompted Cairo activists to demand his release. Working with 14 other clandestine reporters in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, citizen journalist Ryan Boyette and his colleagues have been documenting Sudanese government atrocities by gathering testimonies, photos and video from survivors and eyewitnesses. The team often includes GPS coordinates that locate the attacks, which they transmit to organizations like the Enough Project and Satellite Sentinel Project via solar-powered laptops and satellite phones. When asked about his work, Boyette communicated his frustration with the lack of global attention the Sudanese crisis had been receiving. The Enough Project explains, “Boyette said he was translating the testimony of an elderly man who had fled the fighting when he realized he needed to bring the stories directly to influentials in the United States.” (Revis, 2011).

Those sample cases depict the faith of citizen journalist in citizen journalism. Citizen journalist delivers the news not just for themselves, but to fight for the truth. Those citizen journalist made serious effort in order to present accurate information to the public.

A well-informed public in which media also serves as moral education is some fundamental goals of citizen journalism (Revis, 2011). The basic foundation of its goals is surely very different from mainstream journalism which its goal is to sell as many as possible of its product. Citizen journalism, on the other hand, allows marginalized people to reclaim their voices, to tell their otherwise silenced stories firsthand (Revis, 2011). Perhaps this sounds

very utopian, but citizen journalism has become part of the struggle for the rights of minorities, especially those who might never get the media spotlight.

Another event that which has left a deep impression of citizen journalism is Arab Spring. Huge and massive protest began in late 2010 in Tunisia, later it spread to Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and Syria. The Arab Awakening/Arab Spring is a concept denoting a revolutionary sweeping tide of demonstrations, protests and other forms of opposition to the authorities (both violent and non-violent), riot and protracted civil wars in Arab territories (Salam, 2015).

The major goal of the movement was to create more participatory and representative political systems, a firer economic system, and independent judiciaries (Hunter, 2013). Even though not all protests in Arab Spring called to be successful, but this phenomenon at very least manage to escalate the value of freedom and democracy. Some party consider the Arab Spring as the democrazy acceptance process by Arab countries which mostly adheres to the principle of Islam. Therefore, as one of the result of Arab Spring was the emergence of what has been called political Islam (Hunter, 2013).

Citizen journalism plays significant role in this endeavour. The Arab Spring movement start with one man named Mohammed Bouazizi, who was a young merchant in Tunisia. He was told by police that he wasn't allow to sell his merchandise without paying a bribe that he couldn't afford (Gire, n.d.). Afterwards, he tried express his protest when the authorities refuse to take his problem seriously through social media. This act of protest triggered another protest, up to mass demonstrations. People began to make use of their social media to shout out their anxiety towards the government.

Citizen journalism combined with social media plays important role. Twitter and mobile technology have allowed citizen journalists to more effectively broadcast the consequences of repressive Iranian regime—even when major news outlets were blocked (Revis, 2011). Reporting an actual fact is no longer considered as traditional way of journalism, but it can be done by any person in society. Citizen journalism through social media provide access for society to report and share their ideas to the world. Citizen journalism plays significant role in delivering the sphere of modern democracy.

6. Conclusion

The rise of internet is an opening for birth of citizen journalism. The concept of citizen journalism was unknown before the internet was developed. Nowadays, there are many phrases that represent citizen journalism. Public journalism, civic journalism, advocacy journalism, citizen media participatory journalism, and grassroots journalism are some terms that are considered describe citizen journalism.

Some scholars argue that citizen journalism rise to outdare mainstream journalism. Citizen journalism existed to challenge mainstream journalism as it keep growing and expanding till it become a popular public choice and potentially defeat mainstream media or journalism. Variety of views and impartial reporting the citizen journalism will be more powerful than the newspapers etc. Especially in countries without freedom of expression, the world wide web plays a crucial role in informing people.

On the other hand, some scholars consider that citizen journalism plays role as supply to the mainstream media. The existence of citizen journalism is to accomplish the performance of mainstream media or

journalism. Traditional media reporters are not always able to reach on all over places, but citizens are indeed everywhere and anywhere. Citizen journalism can collect and review things that somehow 'untouchable' for traditional media.

Despite of those debates, the emergence and expansion of citizen journalism are indeed unstoppable affair. Citizen journalism is often categorized as brand new way in reporting news. Different points of view and impartiality becomes the ultimate strength of citizen journalism. Using honest perspectives of the citizen, citizen journalism is present to challenge the existence of traditional media and journalism.

In the role of bridging inequality, citizen journalism has become part of the struggle for the rights of minorities, especially those who might never get the mainstream media spotlight. With the basic goals to create well informed public, citizen journalism accomplished its role in transforming knowledge to society. Moreover, citizen journalism also has taken part in reshaping today's new media in delivering democratic values. In the modern world, citizen journalism is a powerful device in order to build an open and democracy society.

Although the role of citizen journalism is quite significant in modern worlds, there are always obstacles in a matter. One of the biggest and toughest challenges for citizen journalism is threat of hoax. Hoaxes can also be one of the misuse or abuse of citizen journalism. Fake news or hoax can not be underestimated, because once it happens, it can undermine public trust in citizen journalism.

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